ADAMS
1811

Doctor Tufts's Oration.

AN

Oration,

IN HONOUR TO THE MEMORY

OF

General George Washington,

Who died December 14, 1799,

In the 68th Year of his Age.

DELIVERED BEFORE THE INHABITANTS

OF THE

TOWN OF WEYMOUTH,

AT THE

REQUEST OF THEIR SELECTMEN,

On the 22d day of February, 1800.

BY COTTON TUFTS, M.D. M.M.S. & A.A.S.

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IN compoſing this Oration, it was the ſpecial aim of the Author to adapt it to the auditory before whom it was to be delivered, having then no view to its publication. To this, for ſometime, he withheld his conſent, being ſenſible that the public were already in poſſeſſion of numerous performances of a ſimilar kind, and in which more ample juſtice had been done to the ſubject. He has, however, at length yielded to the ſolicitations of particular friends, and of his hearers, hoping that its imperfections will be covered with the veil of candor.

An Oration.

My Friends and Fellow Mourners,

IF the death of a friend naturally excites in the human breaſt the tender emotions of grief and ſorrow; if theſe riſe in proportion to his worth, and to the benefits received from him, or hoped for; what muſt have been our feelings! when it was announced to us, OUR BELOVED WASHINGTON IS NO MORE. Alas, he is lodged in the ſilent manſions of the dead; —he is gone beyond the reach of human ſight! Solemn and affecting thought! Who has not loſt a Friend? and what country has not loſt a Patriot? How ſuddenly have our hopes been blaſted, and our joys turned into weeping and mourning! But whilſt this day we mingle our tears with millions of our fellow-citizens, lamenting the death of a Father, Friend, and Benefactor of our Country—

Let no murmur riſe. With ſubmiſſion bow:
"Since 'twas the will of all-diſpoſing Heav'n
"To reſume the boon, its kind hand had giv'n."

To us are unknown, what mighty events reſt upon the removal of this great pillar of our national independence, union and ſafety. The faithful page of hiſtory has informed us, that the death of a great prince,

or

or great influential character, has often produced aſtoniſhing changes, affecting the ſtate and condition, not only of individuals, but of whole nations. But whether any or what revolutions will enſue, lies concealed in the womb of providence. To us as a nation, it muſt be deeply affecting; and more eſpecially at this critical period, when the nations in Europe are convulſed with war, and we in danger of being involved in the common calamity. Where, if invaded, ſhall we find one like unto WASHINGTON, wiſe in council and experienced in war; one whoſe preſence, at the head of our armies, would inſpire them with equal confidence, and prove an equal terror to our enemies? The loſs muſt be irreparable.

In the midſt of ſorrow, with which the heart is overwhelmed, on the death of thoſe whom we venerated for their eminent virtues, and to whom we were attached by the ſtrongeſt ties of love and gratitude, a recollection of their virtuous deeds, whilſt living, and even a recital of the various incidents of their lives, becomes a ſource of conſolation; it ſooths the ſorrowing heart, and leads to an imitation of their virtues. To ſubſerve theſe purpoſes, may it not be peculiarly grateful, to review the life and actions of the beloved man, the loſs of whom we this day deplore; indeed to give a juſt and complete deſcription of them, would require not only volumes, but an abler pen. A ſhort ſketch therefore is all that can now be eſſayed.

GEORGE WASHINGTON was born of reſpectable parents, in Virginia, on the 11th of February, O. S. 1732. His education, though of a private kind, was aided by an able inſtructor, under whom he made ſwift progreſs in learning, and amaſſed a large ſtock of uſeful knowledge.

Early

Early in life, he diſcovered a military genius; and before he had reached the twentieth year of his age, received a commiſſion in the adjutant-general's department, with the rank of major; and had but juſt paſſed that age, when he was called to a very hazardous and important miſſion.

At this time, the French were in poſſeſſion of Canada; had extended a line of forts from Canada almoſt to Florida; had made encroachments upon our lands, and were daily inſtigating the Indians to murder our people. Under theſe circumſtances, the governor of Virginia ſent major Waſhington to explore the country; to treat with the Indians; to remonſtrate to the French commander, who had erected a fort within the claims of Virginia, and warn him to deſiſt. Amidſt incredible hardſhips and dangers, he proſecuted this buſineſs to the ſatisfaction of his government, and the admiration of the world.

In 1754, he was appointed colonel of a regiment, and was conſtantly employed in the defence of his native ſtate; fought ſeveral battles with the French and Indians, in one of which he obtained a complete victory, making many priſoners; in another, ſurrounded with nearly four times his number, after a ſevere conflict, in which ſeveral hundreds of the enemy were ſlain, he conſented to an honourable capitulation.

In 1755, General Braddock, with two thouſand regular troops, ſent by the Britiſh government to Virginia, being joined by eight hundred militia, marched againſt fort du Queſne, then in poſſeſſion of the French. Colonel Waſhington accompanied him as one of his aids-de-camp. The Britiſh general, confident of ſucceſs, and regardleſs of the advice of his young American aid,

aid, on his march fell into an ambuſh, and was ſlain, together with a great part of his regular troops; that any of them eſcaped was attributed to the ſkill and bravery of the colonel, who, with the militia, covered the confuſed retreat of the army, and was the only officer that ſurvived, whoſe duty it was to be on horſeback that day.

By theſe enterpriſes he had gained much experience; and a foundation was laid for a future and more extenſive diſplay of his military talents. By his unremitted exertions in the ſervice of his country, his conſtitution appeared to be greatly debilitated, and a conſumption faſt progreſſing, which induced him, in 1759, to reſign all his military commands. By the ſmiles of that kind providence, which had deſtined him to be the future deliverer of his country, his health was reſtored. He then applied himſelf to civil life; was conſtantly choſen a member of the Legiſlature; was a magiſtrate of the county, and a judge of the court.

In 1774, he was elected a delegate to the firſt Congreſs of the States, which met at Philadelphia, as well as to that of 1775: an ever-memorable year. The long continued diſputes between us and Great-Britain were now brought to a criſis; the blood of our countrymen had been ſpilled on the 19th of April, by their troops, on the plains of Lexington. The die was now caſt; we muſt either ſubmit to the galling yoke of ſlavery and oppreſſion, or manfully reſiſt, and vindicate our injured rights, at the hazard of life and property. We choſe the latter. But who was to lead us in the perilous conflict! Our political fathers, directed, as it were, by a voice from heaven, fixed their eyes on WASHINGTON, as the man: and accordingly, on the

15th

15th day of June, appointed him commander in chief of the American armies. On the 2d of July he arrived at Cambridge, (being a few days after the memorable battle on Bunker's, or rather Breed's Hill), where he found a great multitude of militia, collected from all quarters, even from Virginia: men naturally brave, but without order, discipline, or regular supplies; deficient in arms and ammunition; diversified also in manners, habits of life, and local prejudices. To unite these jarring elements, and reduce the whole to order and uniformity, was a work that none but a WASHINGTON could have accomplished. By degrees, he reduced the heterogeneous mass into form; established a regular system of defence; confined the enemy within the towns of Boston and Charlestown, and prevented them from making further inroads into the country.

What was our situation before this? Look back, my friends, to the *spring and summer of 1775, to that dark

* On Lord's-day, May 21st, this town was thrown into a great consternation. At six o'clock, A. M. alarm guns were discharged; the cry of plundering, burning, and slaughter was heard in all the streets, ran from neighbour to neighbour, and spread ten or twelve miles in the course of an hour; and before one o'clock, of that day, with surprising speed and alacrity, the militia and others, even from twelve to fifteen miles distance, had collected in this place and its vicinity, to the amount of nearly three thousand, as was then conjectured. This alarm was occasioned by the appearance of a vessel, with British soldiers on board, bending its course to the eastern extremity of the town: they, however, landed opposite to it, on Grape island, where they intended to plunder a large quantity of hay; but discovering some of our sloops, with militia, advancing towards them, they set sail, and departed, without doing any mischief, other than carrying off a small parcel of hay.

dark and gloomy day, when ſadneſs and diſtreſs were painted on every countenance; our harbour filled with ſhips of war; our capital with an army of veteran troops, furniſhed with every thing fitted for ſpreading ruin and deſtruction in our land; and we every moment apprehenſive, that the next would call us to riſk our lives in defence of our houſes, our wives, our children, and all that was dear to us. Could this ſacred temple ſpeak, it would declare, what were our fears, what the ſenſe of our dangers; for here we aſſembled, with arms in our hands, to worſhip the Lord our maker. But let us withdraw from this dark, to a brighter ſcene, which opened upon us in March, 1776. By the conſummate wiſdom and policy of General WASHINGTON, diſplayed upon the heights of Dorcheſter, we were extricated from our local fears and diſtreſſes. On the night of the 4th of March, unperceived by the enemy, a fortification was erected there, which, for its magnitude, effects, and the ſecrecy and diſpatch with which it was executed, was almoſt incredible. On the morning of the 5th, our enemies beheld it with amazement and ſurpriſe; and even their commander in chief was heard to exclaim, "I know not what I ſhall do; the rebels have done more in one night, than my whole army could have done in months." Not long after, both their fleet and army abandoned the ſtate. General WASHINGTON, having arranged affairs here, proceeded to New-York. Except the fortunate event laſt related, ill ſucceſs attended our armies in almoſt every quarter, till the cloſe of the year; at which time a dark cloud hung over all our military concerns, and a degree of deſpondency was viſible among all claſſes of people. The enemy had overrun the Jerſeys, and had extended their

triumphs

triumphs far and near: elate with victory, they thought of little leſs, than our ſpeedy ſubmiſſion to the will of Great-Britain. General WASHINGTON, with moſt of his troops, had, for greater ſafety, croſſed the Delaware. Theſe, by ſickneſs, battles, expiration of enliſtments, deſertions, and other cauſes, were reduced to a ſmall number, and were diſpirited, ill provided for, and now in the cold of winter. In this trying ſcene, enough to have appalled the ſtouteſt heart, WASHINGTON ſtood firm and undiſmayed. He looked within himſelf, and reſolved, collected his ſcattered troops, addreſſed, and, as it were, inſpired them with his own ſoul. On the night of the 25th of December, remarkable for the ſeverity of the cold, he recroſſed the Delaware river, amidſt its broken ice and a furious ſtorm of hail, marched to Trenton, and, at break of day, attacked a body of Heſſians, poſted there, of whom, beſides the ſlain, he made more than nine hundred priſoners, with the loſs of but two killed on our ſide, and two or three frozen to death.

It was not long before the Britiſh army purſued him. As they entered Trenton on one ſide, he, with his little army, paſſed over a bridge to the other; the enemy attempted to croſs it, but were driven back. Night coming on, the Britiſh general retired, reſolving to make a general attack the next morning; but before that time, General WASHINGTON had marched his troops to Princeton, took three or four hundred priſoners, and from thence continued his march to Morriſtown, where he ſurpriſed a party, and made them priſoners alſo; and then retired to a ſituation favourable for the ſecurity of his troops, where he remained unmoleſted.

Theſe

Theſe ſucceſſes intimidated our enemies, and diſconcerted their plans; but raiſed the drooping ſpirits of our countrymen, gave a new ſpring to all our military operations, paved the way for the capture of General Burgoyne and his army, in 1777, and to that complete ſucceſs with which our arms were ultimately crowned.

The events related, furniſh us with ample proofs of the great military talents of General WASHINGTON: from other, and ſucceeding events, to the year 1781, equal proofs might be drawn; but as this ſtate, and we as a part of it, were more particularly intereſted in thoſe of 1775, and part of 1776, and that my younger friends, who were not then upon the ſtage of action, might be more fully acquainted with them, I have been inſenſibly led into a larger detail than was intended, and muſt now paſs them over.

The year 1781 brings us to a period, in which the indefatigable labours, wiſdom, patience, perſonal courage, and military ſkill of General WASHINGTON were crowned with final victory, in the conqueſt of Lord Cornwallis and his army, at York-Town, on the 19th of October, which proved deciſive of the independence of America, and a finiſhing ſtroke to the war. The year following, terms of peace were ſettled; and in 1783, peace was proclaimed in America: an event, which ſpread joy throughout our country; and in the General's heart, it was no doubt exquiſitely felt. It was, however, ſoon obſcured, and his great ſoul brought to a ſevere trial. His brave troops, which had fought, bled, and conquered under him, were now to be diſmiſſed. Behold him at the head of a victorious army; almoſt naked and unpaid; complaining, and almoſt mutinizing; looking up to him, as their father, and

ſupporter

ſupporter of their claims! Did he cheriſh theſe murmurs? Did he encourage them to enforce the payment of their hard-earned wages at the point of the ſword? Did he ſeize upon this occaſion, to make himſelf the ſovereign of his country! No; his inextinguiſhable love of his country ſtruck every ſelfiſh paſſion dead; and with the authority of a father, and the tenderneſs of a friend, he ſoothed, perſuaded, and conjured them, by every motive that could influence brave and generous minds, not, by any act of violence or indiſcretion, to tarniſh the glory they had acquired. He ſucceeded; compoſed his army; in the tendereſt manner took his leave of them, and they, to their immortal honour, retired in peace.

Previous to the reſignation of his military office, he addreſſed each of the ſtates, "taking his leave of them (as he then ſuppoſed) as a public character, and giving his final bleſſing to that country, in whoſe ſervice he had ſpent the prime of his life." His capacious mind fully comprehended the true intereſts of his country; and as a faithful friend, and as a parent anxious for the happineſs of his family, he ſhews us the path, and exhorts us, in the moſt affectionate manner, to walk therein. He does not reſt here; but in the cloſe of his addreſs, pours out his ſoul, in the moſt fervent and importunate ſupplications to the great Father of our ſpirits, "that he would moſt graciouſly be pleaſed to diſpoſe us all to do juſtice, to love mercy, and to demean ourſelves with that charity, humility, and pacific temper of mind, which were the characteriſtics of the divine Author of our religion; and without an humble imitation of whoſe example, in theſe things, we can never hope to be a happy nation."

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The father and deliverer of his country had, for eight long years, devoted himſelf to its ſervice; and having reaped the end of his labours, its peace and independence, he now reſigned his military command; and as an admirable trait in his character, it may be obſerved, that through the whole of it, notwithſtanding his peculiar trials and temptations, he neither violated the rights of citizens, nor thoſe of the civil magiſtrate.

For ſeveral years, he enjoyed, at Mount Vernon, the pleaſures of domeſtic life; cultivating his extenſive lands, and making improvements in agriculture, the favourite object of his heart. In all other things *great*, he was *great* too as a farmer. "He had nine thouſand acres of land under cultivation; has raiſed, in one year, ſeven thouſand buſhels of wheat, and ten thouſand buſhels of Indian corn, beſides other produce." From this fond employment, in 1789, he was invited, by the united voice of more than three millions of his fellow-citizens, to take upon him the preſidential charge of that government, the conſtitution of which he had no ſmall ſhare in planning, and at the formation of which he preſided. This office he accepted with that modeſty and diffidence, that is not ſeen but in minds of exalted merit; rejecting, as in all other public appointments, ſo in this, any pecuniary conſideration whatever.

He was now crowned with the higheſt honour that his country could beſtow. He had now to ſet in motion, a government, new in its form, untried before, and to give it its force and direction. The world had ſeen the great Warrior; they now beheld the accompliſhed Stateſman, adminiſtering his government with wiſdom, prudence, firmneſs, and integrity, and obſerving good faith and juſtice towards all nations. Our nation,

nation, in the mean time, enjoyed unheard-of wealth and proſperity. Foreign nations ſaw and envied it. Their embroiled ſtate and corrupted policy could not long ſuffer America to enjoy tranquillity. Very ſoon, ſome of them ſtrove to entangle us in their bloody conteſts. France, which had attempted to engage us in its *terrible* ſyſtem, having failed of ſucceſs, had recourſe to the powers of ſeduction, dark intrigue, and their atheiſtic philoſophy, that fell deſtroyer of religion, morals, government, and of men, and begat their offspring, diſcord, faction, and rebellion. But all their endeavours to fix an indelible ſtain on the character of WASHINGTON, "as chaſte as ice, as pure as ſnow," were fruitleſs. He, by his vigilance, defeated their vile attempts to ſubvert our conſtitution and government. Regardleſs of all oppoſition, he ſteadily perſevered in the line of duty, and, with an even hand, guided the helm of ſtate; till, in 1797, when, having preſided eight years, and paſſed through two elections with the unanimous voice of the people, he declined a third, and delivered his laſt addreſs to the people of his charge, fraught with the pureſt patriotiſm, political wiſdom, religion, and morality.

In March, 1797, he once more repaired to Mount Vernon, his delighful ſeat, there to enjoy the ſweets of retirement, expecting no more to engage in the anxious cares of public life. In 1798, the ſtorm of war threatening to burſt on the United States, it became expedient to raiſe an army. The venerable and aged warrior was ſolicited to take the command. He ſaw his country in danger; his love to it knew no end; it outweighed every other conſideration, and he accepted the call. In this high command, he continued till on the 14th of December,

December, 1799, then in the ſixty-eighth year of his age, when the King of kings and the Lord of hoſts diſcharged him from his warfare here below, to aſſume, as we truſt, a more exalted ſtation in the world above. By accounts, which have been publiſhed, it appears, that his ſickneſs was ſhort and painful. On Friday, he was attacked with a ſpecies of the quinſy; on the evening of the next day, about ten o'clock, he expired. A ſhort time before he died, he ſaid to his phyſician, What is the clock? How long am I to remain in this ſituation? The doctor replied, Not long, Sir. He then rejoined, with a countenance expreſſive of the greateſt compoſure of mind, Doctor, I have no fear to die; and preſently after expired, without a ſigh or a groan.

"When keeneſt anguiſh rack'd his mighty ſoul,
"And the fond heart the joys of life reſign'd,
"No guilt, nor terror, ſtretch'd its hard control,
"No doubt obſcur'd the ſunſhine of the ſoul.
"Prepar'd for death, his calm and ſteady eye
"Look'd fearleſs upward to a peaceful ſky;
"While wondering angels point the airy road,
"Which leads the chriſtian to the throne of God."

In this illuſtrious man, there was an aſſemblage of virtues, that attracted the admiration of the world. The earlier parts of his life were marked with filial love and obedience to his parents, engaging manners, and a diligent and uſeful improvement of time. At a more advanced period, when in a family ſtate, towards the amiable companion of his life, he was tender and affectionate; and towards his domeſtics, "mild as a father." In his intercourſe with the world, he was juſt, generous, and humane. He was temperate amidſt the higheſt affluence,

affluence, and a ſtranger to immoderate pleaſures. He poſſeſſed his great riches without vanity or profuſion, diſtributing them, as the almoner of Heaven, for the benefit and comfort of mankind.

All his affairs, in private as well as in public life, were arranged in exact order, and daily adjuſted; ſo that the cloſing ſcene of life left them but two days in arrear.

In public life, we have viewed him; we have ſeen a Hero, Sage, and Patriot; whoſe bodily form was ſuch as to command reſpect; who ſeldom ſpoke but with force and perſuaſion, or wrote but with eaſe, ſtrength, and elegance. His mind was comprehenſive, memory tenacious, apprehenſion quick, diſcernment juſt, and his judgment ſolid. His diſcretion, and command of his paſſions, were ſcarcely equalled; and to a collected mind, for every exigency, were joined an unſhaken fortitude and patience, under the ſevereſt trials, and a reſolution equal to every enterpriſe; nor was he leſs diſtinguiſhed for his ardent love of liberty, of his country, and good will to all mankind. His character ſhines with ſtill greater luſtre, viewed in his exemplary regard to religion, his firm confidence in the Supreme Ruler of the world, and his dependance upon Him, as his duty and beſt ſupport, and whoſe providence he ever publicly acknowledged in all the great events of his life.

We dare not affirm, that he was ſpotleſs, and without error; for he was a man. But we may venture to affirm, that among uninſpired men, the world has rarely, if ever, ſeen one more uniformly great and good. Such was WASHINGTON! Surely heaven muſt have endowed him with extraordinary talents. Some ſublime principles muſt have been interwoven in the very texture of his

ſoul, operating as a ſure ſtandard, and as an unerring guide, to have produced ſuch conſiſtency and magnanimity through life, and majeſty in death itſelf. So much worth could not lay concealed. His name and his fame went throughout the civilized world. He was revered by * kings and princes; beloved by the wiſe and good in all nations; his virtues were celebrated in courts, camps, and armies. His own countrymen, while living, diſplayed greater tokens of love and reſpect towards him, than perhaps any earthly monarch ever received from his ſubjects; nor will their grateful hearts ceaſe to yield equal honours to the memory of their departed friend.

That America enjoyed this choice bleſſing for ſuch a length of time, demands our pious gratitude. Though he did not live to extreme old age, yet he lived to ſurvive the moſt of his old friends, and compatriots. Of thoſe who ſat with him in the firſt American Congreſs, ſcarce any one of thoſe renowned patriots are ſeen in the preſent, but his old friend and brother in council, the great and celebrated Stateſman now preſiding there, whoſe life may God long preſerve. Where are they? and where are all his once beloved and brave officers and ſoldiers, who fought under him, and aided in his triumphs? Alas, the greater part of theſe are fallen; and of us, ere long it will be ſaid, they are no more. Well, then, like him, let us fill up every ſpace of remaining life with ſome uſeful action.

Was it that heaven conferred this high favour upon America, that her ſons might behold to what a height of perfection

* I have ſome where met with this anecdote: that Frederick, the late king of Pruſſia, once ſaid, "I am the oldeſt, but WASHINGTON is the greateſt general."

perfection human nature was capable of attaining, and be attracted to an imitation of his virtues? Oh may we never fruſtrate the gracious intentions of Heaven! Let us hear him, whom we once loved and honoured, now ſpeaking to us in his leſſons of wiſdom; learn them with engaged attention, and teach them our children.—Let us hear him in his example, and receive inſtruction. Let all the people of America practically regard thoſe political truths, and maxims of morality, bequeathed to them in his laſt legacy; then ſhall we be a happy nation indeed. Let kings and rulers alſo hear, and profit by his wiſdom and example; then ſhall the peace and happineſs of the world no longer be diſturbed by their vain ambition, and the world bleſs heaven, that WASHINGTON was born. With this day's mourning, will the memory of him ceaſe? No; the remembrance of him ſhall never periſh; his virtues ſhall never die; they ſhall ſhed their benign influence upon the ſurrounding world, and ſurvive time itſelf.